

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Human Resources Committee

Item

13 July 2010

Our Journey to “Excellence”

Report by Kathy Bowden Ellis, Equality and Diversity Manager

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1 Summary

- 1.1 As part of our journey to “Excellent” of the Fire Service Equality Improvement Framework, the Service Management Team have created a vision of what the Service would look and feel like at a time when we are ready to claim the Service is at “Excellent” of the Framework.
- 1.2 This paper sets out the methodology for arriving at that vision, and points to the presentation of the vision.

2 Recommendation

That the Human Resources (HR) Committee endorse the content of this report.

3 Introduction and background

- 3.1 The Peer Assessment completed by the Innovations and Development Agency (IDEA) in November 2008 satisfied the requirements of the Equality Standard for Local Government Level 3. The Fire Service Equality Improvement Framework (referred to as the Framework) replaced that standard in January 2010. The new framework has 3 levels; Developing, Achieving and Excellent. HFRS can migrate to “Achieving” status of the Framework as the equivalent to level 3 of the old standard. “Excellent” is the equivalent of the old level 5.
- 3.2 Fire and rescue services are able to rely on their migration status for three years, by which time they will be expected to have progressed to the next level of the Framework. For HFRS we will need to have demonstrated significant progress in our equality agenda by November 2011 for our “Achieving” status to retain its currency.
- 3.3 The Framework places high expectations on fire and rescue services to demonstrate continuous improvement, year on year, in order to be in a position to claim “Excellent” status.

- 3.4 An “Excellent authority” is one that is able to demonstrate that it is “making a difference” with regards to equality and diversity outcomes. By that time we should be able to demonstrate, with evidence, that we have a range of successes in meeting equality objectives. We will have developed a positive reputation in the community and with key partners for championing and achieving equality outcomes. With a sophisticated understanding of our communities, gained through our engagement and involvement with them, we will have improved satisfaction with, and understanding of, the services we provide. Those services will be informed by our engagement with the community, which will be fully embedded and helping us to shape and inform our strategic direction.
- 3.5 Visioning for what “Excellence” could look like for HFRS took place with Service Managers on 27th May 2010.
- 3.6 Background and context setting was provided in relation to the five headings of the Framework. These are as follows:
- Leadership and promoting inclusion
 - Accountability
 - Service delivery and community engagement
 - Employment and Training
 - Best Practice

From this information Service Managers were asked to articulate what HFRS would be doing in the future that would be different from today’s position.

- 3.7 This resulted in five sets of data, which were then consolidated and used to create the presentation, “Visioning Journey to Excellence.” (see appendix 1)

4 Next Steps

- 4.1 The Visioning Journey to Excellence will be presented to Leadership Forum and used in discussion with managers and employees, particularly those who have been identified as having key roles in supporting our journey to excellence. It will also be shared with the HR Committee, our external advisory group and the Local Diversity Group.
- 4.2 Action plans relating to the vision will be uploaded to the Equality Framework Evidence Collection Tool (EF-ECT). HFRS are using this as a central co-ordination point in preparation for external verification and peer assessment throughout our journey to excellent status.

5 Supporting our corporate aims and objectives

- 5.1 Our commitment to achieving the Framework is implicit within our objectives to mainstream equality and diversity through Operational Diversity. This is in accordance with both our most recent and future Service Plans.

6 Risk analysis

- 6.1 Failure to demonstrate continuous improvement from our Level 3 achievement within the 3 year migration status period may present reputational issues for HFRS.
- 6.2 Failure to progress our actions in accordance with the requirements of the ESG/FSEIF will impact upon our achievement of our Service Plan as well as undermine our credibility and reputation when measured against our regional partners.
- 6.3 The FSEIF supports corporate governance and compliance under equality legislation. Non compliance carries the risk of litigation, financial penalties and damage to reputation.
- 6.4 The failure to reach the highest level of the Framework risks undermine our core values, hindering our aim to be an employer of choice and inhibiting the quality of the delivery of our services.

7 People Impact Assessment

- 7.1 No negative impacts identified. Our commitment to the Framework and to attain the highest level within it is indicative of HFRS' support to equality and diversity in the delivery of our services to our communities and in the way in which we employ or staff.
- 7.2 The proposals in this report are considered compatible with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

8 Environmental and Sustainability impact assessment

- 8.1 None identified

9 Resource implications

- 9.1 Human Resources
Work to be completed within existing arrangements.
- 9.2 Physical Resources
Work to be completed within existing arrangements.
- 9.3 Information and Communications Technology Resources
Work to be completed within existing arrangements.
- 9.4 Financial Implications
Work to be completed within existing arrangements.

10 Conclusion

- 10.1 HFRS's commitment to the equality agenda has always been, and remains clear. Our self and peer assessment for Level 3 provided good evidence of this. Our approach to achieving "Excellence" will need to provide additional and new evidence that helps

demonstrate our continuous improvement year on year.

- 10.2 The Framework is an intrinsic part of attaining corporate compliance and continues our drive to become a high performing service. Overall, the Framework aims to ensure that equality becomes mainstreamed and implicit within everyone's day to day activities and in how we do business. It supports the primary principles of operational diversity and the requirements of the National E&D Strategy.
- 10.3 As a result of our work to meet the requirements of the Framework, HFRS will be able to demonstrate the development of better delivery outcomes to our customers with a strong emphasis on community engagement. This is an essential part of equality improvement.

11 Background papers

- 11.1 The following documents disclose the facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and has been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of the report:

Presentation: Equality Improvement Framework. Journey to Excellence - Creating a vision for what Excellence looks like at Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service (Attached).

Fire Service Equality Improvement Framework.

Note: The list excludes: (1) published works; and (2) documents that disclose exempt or confidential information defined in the Act.